



One-of-a-Kind, Two Ways

Though each issue of ASK Magazine addresses the concerns of project management, this issue, like all previous issues, is a one-of-a-kind product filled with the unique and often innovative insights of individual project practitioners

IN THAT WAY, WE FEEL A KINSHIP WITH AMES RESEARCH Center technologist Dan Gundo, who builds one-of-a-kind hardware for NASA projects and has given us a story about one. In “The Clock Is Ticking,” Gundo writes about an exercise bed he built for space scientists studying ways to counter the atrophying effects of microgravity on human muscles. The novelty of the exercise bed is only part of what we think you’ll find interesting in the story. Best of all is how Gundo learned to work with his customer to define project requirements clearly enough and early enough to allow him to meet a challenging deadline.

Requirements challenges come up in another story, “Enough is Enough,” by James Barrowman. On the Rossi X-Ray Timing Explorer mission, Barrowman worked with the science team to put down on paper what constituted “good enough” science before development work on the spacecraft began. This looked prescient when a technical problem emerged, and suddenly the scientists forgot about what was good enough.

This story is not the first to appear by Barrowman in ASK. In Issue 3, we featured his story “Pin the Deputy’s Badge on Me” about doing double duty as program manager and deputy project manager in the Explorer Program Office at Goddard Space Flight Center. You can read Barrowman’s other story by going to the ASK archives on our Web site.

Donald Margolies is also making a repeat appearance in the magazine. We featured a story by Margolies in Issue 9 about an episode on the Advanced Composition Explorer (ACE) mission, for which he was project manager. In the interview you’ll find in this issue, Margolies invokes examples from ACE to discuss the challenges of scheduling. After reading the interview, you may want to read more about ACE. Again, visit our Web site and you’ll find several stories about ACE in Issue 9.

If it sounds as though I’m pushing our Web site, then I guess it’s because I am. After several issues not having a Web companion to our print edition, ASK is back online at appl.nasa.gov/ask.

We’ve taken advantage of being part of the expansive NASA portal to introduce many new features. For example, in this print issue we’ve collected several lessons learned from retired Goddard project manager Jerry Madden. These lessons first appeared in 1995 when Jerry released his underground cult classic, “A Project Manager’s Lessons Learned.” We’ve pulled together some of our favorite here from the 128 Madden collected. If you want to read all of the lessons and you don’t have a well-connected friend with the original copy of the lessons, you can find them all on the ASK Web site. And by the way, you can also read an interview we did with Madden that appeared in Issue 4.

What else this issue? In early 2004, a NASA spacecraft will intersect a comet and return home in 2006 with some microscopic particles of stardust, another one-of-a-kind mission. This is the subject of Jet Propulsion Laboratory project manager Ken Atkins’ story “Mr. Stardust’s Wild Ride.” The spacecraft is presently on its way to rendezvous with Comet Wild II, but Atkins will tell you how precipitously close the project came to an early demise. This story will be a jolt to anyone who thinks the only money issue that matters on a project is how much you get. Atkins shows that *when* the money arrives can be just as important.

There is plenty more good stuff in Issue 14, so go ahead and dive in. •